

The power that media exert over public opinion is obvious. Studies have shown that where a person gets their news directly affects their understanding of the world around them. The ability of the media to mold reality in people's minds is of course exactly the reason why Plato, 2,400 years ago, was against such public display of opinion (i.e. "art"). He realized that all things being equal, a person is likely to believe what a supposed expert tells them if they have no personal experience from which to draw on that subject.

Our Democratic Republic is founded on the principle that every individual has a stake, and thus a say, in who will represent them in government. This fact demands that every individual's freedom to participate in the electoral process not be compromised by interests beyond the citizenry. Corporations are not individual citizens, are excluded from the electoral process and have no rights under the constitution. Yet they often have the most to gain, financially, by supporting one candidate over another. This paradox expresses itself when the corporation in question is a media source for the

public, as it has indirect control of the individuals that do have the direct power to choose one candidate or the other.

This has obviously been recognized in the past, and some laws have been instituted that set some limits for how corporations and media can participate in the electoral process. Yet today, the vast majority (~90%) of all media in the U.S. is controlled by a mere handful of companies. The effect is that a majority of Americans are under the influence of the few tens of individuals who operate the media conglomerates. This goes against the very premise of our Republic and must be carefully regulated to insure that these media sources work for the common interests of all citizens.

This can be done by banning the media from making any comment on the process, but this goes against our most cherished freedom, that of free speech and free press. The other way this can be done, although vastly more complicated than a simple ban, is a short leash rule that ensures that more coverage, in abundance or in quality and accuracy, is not given to one candidate or the other.

Sinclair
Broadcasting's
decision to force
their stations to
air an anti-Kerry
documentary days
before the election
is a clear example
of the dangers of
media consolidation.
A ban that prohibits
this would be wrong,
but we are then
stuck with the
problem of knowing
for a fact that it
will influence the
election and that
the outcome of the
election will thus
be tainted by the
will of a few
individuals rather
than the pure will
of all individuals
who are, on paper at
least, supposedly
equal with respect
to the law.
Therefore a second
program should be
required that allows
the other side of
the story to be
told, and it should
be showed at a time
where it will be
viewed by a similar
number of people.
Then everyone's
freedom of speech
will be respected
and the effect of a
biased perspective
will be minimized as
people will be less
influenced by the
media if two
different
perspectives are
offered,
demonstrating that
neither one nor the
other can claim
hegemony over the
truth.

Thank you for
protecting the
individuals of this
country from those
who would attempt to
usurp their free
will and autonomy.

Sincerely,
Paul J. Pease
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California, Berkeley